WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Mobilising International Opinion on Hijacking of IA Plane

*1. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what political pressure, in view of the hijacking of Indian Airlines, flight, had been mounted in mobilising international opinion on hijackers' mentors' in Pakistan and the Taliban authorities;

(b) whether Government are aware that the United States took full four days to react to the hijacking and UK have been conspicuous by not stating anything and there was lukewarm response from other Western powers that provided sustenance to the hijackers; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) An exercise to inform international public opinion was put into operation immediately after the hijacking of IC-814 occurred.

External Affairs Minister personally contacted several of his counterparts in the international community. This included the neighbouring countries, member countries in the UN Security Council and the Foreign Ministers of Governments with nationals aboard the hijacked aircraft. Foreign Secretary was also in touch with some of his counterparts abroad and with the Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Delhi. In all instances, pledges of support and cooperation were received. All governments expressed their support for any decision that would eventually be taken to ensure the safety of passengers and to terminate the hijacking. All our foreign interlocutors expressed their understanding of the difficult choices the Government of India faced in dealing with the incident. After the arrival of the hijacked aircraft at Kandahar, at India's request, countries whose nationals were aboard the aircraft sent special emissaries also to Kandahar.

(b) International support for India, and condemnation of the hijacking, was further elaborated in official statements issued by several foreign Governments. These official statements left no doubt that the hijacking of IC-814 represented an unacceptable act of

international terrorism, also that any action undertaken by the Indian Government would receive their full support.

(c) Government have brought to the attention of the international community the role played by Pakistan in the hijacking. Government have raised the matter with the Government of Pakistan and have provided evidence to them of the involvement of their nationals in the hijacking. The hijackers are believed to be currently in Pakistan. Government have reminded the Government of Pakistan that as a signatory to several International Conventions against Terrorism, also the Simla Agreement of 1972, and the Lahore Declaration, it has an international obligation to take the hijackers into custody and to extradite them to India. The Government of Pakistan, in its response, has reiterated its general position that it would undertake to apprehend and prosecute any person or persons found on its territory or the territory of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir who may be suspected of having committed such offences related to hijacking. As they have at the same time rejected our demarche, Pakistan's general commitment is of little value.

Government have also raised the matter with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) with the view to bring to the attention of the member countries the need to adopt appropriate measures to apprehend and extradite the hijackers to India.

The Taliban authorities, while adopting an attitude of correct facilitators, consistently had their sympathies with the hijackers and their other supporters.

The hijacking incident also highlighted to the international community evidence of Pakistan's continued state sponsorship of terrorism, and its attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of India. The international community now better recognises Pakistan's state sponsorship of terrorism and the impact this has on the security of India and the region. This increased awareness is now reflected in both official statements by spokesmen of foreign Governments and the coverage of the international media.